

Abstract for CPDD

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Cannabis interacts with specific psychotic symptoms to increase severity of violent behavior in individuals with psychotic disorders

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Other Directed Violence (ODV) is a serious public health concern. There is an established association in the literature between ODV and a poorly characterized subgroup of individuals with psychotic disorders, most of whom have comorbid substance use diagnoses. We investigated the presence of Threat Control/Override (TCO), a subset of psychotic symptoms and use of cannabis just prior to and during violent events perpetrated by 60 individuals with psychotic disorders. Information was obtained from self-report, official records and interview with the subjects and collaterals. Violence was measured by the Violence Assessment Scale (VAS) from 0-no violence to 100-most severe. Results show that individuals who have used cannabis during the incident ($n=35$) were significantly ($F=7.12$, $p<.05$) more violent than those who did not ($n=25$). Furthermore, there was a significant interaction between TCO symptoms and cannabis use. Those with TCO symptoms who did not use cannabis were the least violent ($VAS=8$) and those with TCO who used cannabis at the time of the incident have perpetrated, on average, 9 fold more severe violent behavior ($VAS=72$; $F=13.34$, $p<.001$). Although cannabis is not generally associated with violence in the literature, these preliminary results reveal an interaction where cannabis may exacerbate specific psychotic symptomatology to increase the severity of violence in individuals with psychotic disorders. Thus, the role of cannabis in violence and psychosis deserves further attention. (Supported by the Stanley Medical Research Institute)

